

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (withdrawn): An apparatus for rapid screening of parcels to identify parcels likely to contain biological or non-biological contaminants, comprising:

a jogger for shaking a plurality of parcels;
an air duct for channeling an air flow over the plurality of parcels in the jogger; and
a particulate sampler for analyzing the air flow to detect whether the plurality of parcels is likely to include contaminants.

Claim 2 (withdrawn): The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a particulate concentrator for filtering the air flow.

Claim 3 (withdrawn): The apparatus of claim 2, wherein the particulate concentrator includes a particulate air filter which is analyzed at periodic intervals to confirm the accuracy of the analysis performed by the particulate sampler.

Claim 4 (withdrawn): The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the jogger further comprises a ram that compresses the parcels.

Claim 5 (withdrawn): The apparatus of claim 4, wherein the ram is fixably attached to a push plate which contacts one of a plurality of parcels juxtaposed positioned in a bin of the jogger.

Claim 6 (withdrawn): An apparatus for rapid screening of parcels to identify parcels likely to contain biological or non-biological contaminants, comprising:

- a cutter for opening each parcel;
- a jogger for shaking the opened parcels;
- an air duct for channeling an air flow obtained when the jogger shakes the opened parcels; and

a particulate sampler connected by the air duct to the jogger, wherein the particulate sampler analyzes the air flow to detect whether the plurality of opened parcels is likely to include contaminants.

Claim 7 (withdrawn): The apparatus of claim 6, further comprising a hood which covers the jogger and the cutter.

Claim 8 (withdrawn): The apparatus of claim 6, wherein the jogger includes a bin capable of holding a plurality of parcels.

Claim 9 (withdrawn): The apparatus of claim 8, wherein the jogger further includes a cover that covers parcels loaded into the bin.

Claim 10 (withdrawn): The apparatus of claim 6, wherein the cutter slits open a corner of each parcel.

Claim 11 (withdrawn): The apparatus of claim 6, wherein the cutter punches a hole in each parcel.

Claim 12 (withdrawn):

The apparatus of claim 6, wherein the jogger further comprises a ram for compressing the parcels.

Claim 13 (currently amended): A method for rapid screening of parcels to identify parcels likely to contain particles of biological or non-biological contaminants, comprising the steps of:

opening cutting a corner of each parcel;
shaking and compressing the parcels simultaneously thereby releasing any particles in or on the parcel;
creating an air flow over the parcels as the parcels are simultaneously shaken and compressed; and
analyzing sampling the air flow in real-time to detect whether the airflow contains either a high concentration of particles or particles with suspect characteristics;
collecting particles in the air flow with a particulate concentrator equipped with a filter; and
analyzing the filter periodically to provide a second-check of the accuracy of the sampling step.

Claims 14-16 (canceled)

Claim 17 (withdrawn): An apparatus for rapid screening of parcels to identify parcels likely to contain biological or non-biological contaminants, comprising:

a jogger for shaking a plurality of parcels;
an air duct for channeling an air flow over the plurality of parcels in the jogger; and
a particulate concentrator for filtering the air flow, wherein the particulate concentrator is analyzed at periodic intervals to analyze the air flow to detect whether the plurality of parcels is likely to include contaminants.

Claim 18 (withdrawn): The apparatus of claim 17, further comprising a cutter for opening each parcel prior to the shaking of the parcels.

Claim 19 (new): The method of claim 13 further comprising the step of vacuuming away the corners cut from the parcels.

Claim 20 (new): The method of claim 13, the sampling step comprising the step of utilizing predetermined characteristic signatures of particles.

Claim 21 (new): The method of claim 20, the utilizing predetermined characteristic signatures of particles step comprising at least one of a threshold detection and a Multivariate Gaussian classifier.

Claim 22 (new): The method of claim 13 further comprising the step of processing parcels known to produce high background particle counts in batches separate from other parcels.

Claim 23 (new): The method of claim 13 further comprising the step of punching an opening in the parcel.

Claim 24 (new): The method of claim 13 wherein the filter is provided with a unique identifier corresponding to a group of parcels found to be non-suspect during the sampling step thereby permitting the non-suspect group of parcels to be identified and re-screened if particles of biological or non-biological contaminants are detected during the analyzing the filter step.